

SPECIAL ISSUE! INTERVIEW GOES INSIDE L.A.

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MARILYN MANSON

THE SHOCK! THE MYSTERY! THE GHOULS! AT HOME WITH THE PRINCE OF PROVACATIVE AND MARY ASTOR'S GHOST

BY MICHAEL MUSTO PHOTOGRAPHS BY KARL LAGERFELD

Devil in a blue dress? No, just a head-spinning provocateur wearing whatever he likes. Marilyn Manson, the self-proclaimed "Antichrist Superstar," is coming back to haunt us on several fronts—as a musician (*The Golden Age of Grotesque*, due out on Interscope next year), actor (*Party Monster*, also due next year), and all-around bad boy appealing to the darker side of young minds. In 20 years, he'll probably have a reality TV show like Ozzy Osbourne, but in the meantime, Marilyn is dangerous—and dangerously good. From his hillside cottage in "Holy Wood," he radiated the most shocking revelation of all: He's kind of nice, too!

MICHAEL MUSTO: Hi, Marilyn. I knew Christina Smith, the '80s drag queen you play in the nightclub movie *Party Monster*.

MARILYN MANSON: Not many people did. I wish I'd have had a chance to talk to you.

MUSTO: Christina used to walk around with—

MANSON: —a hatchet.

MUSTO: [laughs] Yeah, a hatchet and a wig that she said was the baby she was nursing. But let's bury the hatchet and talk about L.A. I think maybe the town gets a bad rap from New Yorkers, although I can't live there, because I don't drive and I'm allergic to the sun.

MANSON: [with a German accent] It's so fuckin' terrible here, Michael. I can't stand it.

MUSTO: You're channeling Christina now!

MANSON: I don't leave the house, though.

MUSTO: Do you really live in legendary actress Mary Astor's old house?

MANSON: Yes. It was built for her by George S. Kaufman for one of their love trysts. And then in the '70s, it was occupied by the Stones. The house has a great legacy to it. I feel like it's kind of haunted, but not in a way that bothers me.

I always sense people running up and down the stairs in the middle of the night.

MUSTO: Do you think it's Mary Astor?

MANSON: I'm not really sure. It could be rats.

MUSTO: Is there anything about the decaying grandeur of Hollywood that appeals to you, even though you don't leave the house? There must be!

MANSON: Well, as a kid, being fascinated with movies and Marilyn Monroe and Charles Manson, I was destined to come here. And the first time I did, when my mommy let me go on a field trip, I went to look at the Sharon Tate house and Hollywood Boulevard. It just seemed like such a dirty, filthy place—but in a different way than New York is a dirty, filthy place. In L.A., they kind of hide the dirt and filth.

MUSTO: They mix it with glitter.

MANSON: Glitter and litter are very close.

MUSTO: But do you think L.A. gets overly ragged on? I mean, I don't mind it for three days at a time.

MANSON: See, I feel the same way about New York. I have always been unable to deal with a lot of people being around me. I start feeling claustrophobic. I think that is one of the reasons why people like me become entertainers. My music is how I communicate with people. I can't go out to nightclubs. I can't deal with all the phony handshaking and all the people that make me start feeling like I'm in a Fellini film. There's a movie called *Toby Dammit* [a vignette about a self-destructive actor that's part of the film *Spirits of the Dead*, 1968] that's adapted from an Edgar Allan Poe story, and I feel like *Toby Dammit* every time.

MUSTO: It's funny you mention that because I was going to ask if Poe was a big influence on you.

MANSON: I was just thinking about painting a por-

trait of Poe today, because I was looking through this book about absinthe that I have five copies of—everyone buys it for me as a gift, because they know that I've been drinking absinthe for four or five years now. In the photograph I took for this interview, I went for a Poe sort of presentation. I kind of like Poe's real-life story more than some of his things that I've read.

MUSTO: Do you ever get tired of defending yourself against all the people suing you and blaming you for things like Columbine?

MANSON: The blame, I don't get tired of. It's become part of my personality. And I can't say I haven't asked for it right out of the gate, with a name like Marilyn Manson. But lawsuits and things like that are tiring, because people try to silence me as an artist. Since they're not able to, they just think of other ways. Detroit has tried to ban me on so many occasions, and I'm sure they were thrilled to find someone who wanted to bring criminal charges against me. [Manson recently pleaded no contest to charges that he rubbed his crotch against a security guard's head during a concert last year.] I'm not going to take it sitting down. I'm not going to take it in the ass any more—unless I've brought the lubrication.

MUSTO: And the condom.

MANSON: That will be the pull quote.

MUSTO: The title! You're finishing up *The Golden Age of Grotesque* now, right?

MANSON: Yes. And the record is the strangest and most personal and interesting and confusing piece of dada musical deformity that I could possibly come up with. Everyone who hears it compares it to the careless abandon of youth, of the early days. But I think on the last record I had a careless abandon. I felt like I had been attacked so much that I wasn't concerned if people liked the record commercially or not. I've (more Manson page 172)



(continued from page 170) had relationships with people, male and female, over the past 10 years that have stifled my creativity, and this time I feel in control.

MUSTO: Is it true that you split with [bassist] Twiggy Ramirez?

MANSON: Yes. I think his relationship in the band became old to him. It's like when you're married to somebody and you start sleeping with other people. It was a tough decision, but we decided it was best that he go somewhere else so he would have his interests fulfilled. Hopefully, some day I'll have my friend back.

MUSTO: I hope so. Is your relationship with Rose McGowan kaput, too?

MANSON: I haven't spoken with her in years. The last time I talked to her was when my dad was moving her furniture out of my house.

MUSTO: I never got an official memo. The breakup just kind of happened.

MANSON: I don't know if she did, either. I think that was one relationship that I felt I couldn't be myself in. My girlfriend now is the love of my life, Dita Von Teese. She likes what I do and understands that that is what makes me who I am. I run across people who say, "I don't want to like you for Marilyn Manson; I want to like you for who you really are." But that's who I really am!

MUSTO: I know! Well, thanks, Marilyn. I look forward to all your sundry projects.

MANSON: I'm trying to make Hollywood a place like New York was in the era of *Party Monster*. I want to bring back that decadence. My hibernation has really been an incubation period, because when I unleash myself with *The Golden Age of Grotesque*, it's going to revive this city into a place that you might want to live in some day.

MUSTO: I'll have to learn to drive!

Michael Musto is a columnist for *The Village Voice*. Opposite: Marilyn Manson wears a suit, tie and boots by DIOR HOMME BY HEDI SLIMANE. Cosmetic colors: M·A·C. Styling: L'WREN SCOTT. Hair: ODILE GILBERT/L'Atelier(68). Makeup: STEPHANE MARAIS/Studio 57. Special thanks: SMASH-BOX, L.A. Fashion details page 195.



